

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 OMB-01 DRC-01 /136 W

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R 291312Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1270

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 7942

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NI

SUBJECT: FURTHER FMG VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: LAGOS 7532 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY. ISRAELI AMBASSADOR HAS GIVEN US FMG VIEW OF ARAG-ISRAELI ISSUE ALLEGEDLY OBTAINED FROM COMMISSIONER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ARIKPO. ACCORDING ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, ARIKPO REASSURING ON CONTINUED FMG MODERATION RE ME QUESTION AND INTENTION MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITHGOI. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR SEPTEMBER 28, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR BEN YAACOV, RECENTLY RETURNED FROM HOME LEAVE, PROVIDED VERY FORTHCOMING ACCOUNT OF HIS MEETING TWO DAYS EARLIER WITH COMMISSIONER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ARIKPO TO DISCUSS ME ISSUE AT ALGIERS NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE AND CURRENT FMG ATTITUDES ON ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION.

2. ACCORDING BEN YAACOV, HE WAS NOT TOO CONCERNED BY GOWON'S SHARP POST-NAC REMARKS (REFTEL) ABOUT ISRAEL BUT SOUGHT MEETING WITH ARIKPO IN ORDER OBTAIN MORE DEFINITIVE STATEMENT
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FMG VIEWS FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. MEETING WITH ARIKPO SEPTEMBER 26

OPENED WITH LONG MONOLOGUE BY COMMISSIONER ABOUT NAC, RESULTS OF WHICH, ARIKPO SIAD, WERE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO HIM AND TO GOWON. ME RESOLUTION PARTICULARLY DISAPPOINTING, ARIKPO CONTINUED, BECAUSE RADICAL APPROACH IT REFLECTED WILL NOT REGAIN ANY TERRITORY. RADICALS LED BY QADDAFI DOMINATED NAC, AND EFFORTS BY TITO AND OTHERS TO MODERATE ME RESOLUTION HAD NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. AS RESULT, TITO AND MRS GANDHI, AMONG OTHERS, SHARED DISAPPOINTMENT FELT BY NIGERIANS.

3. WHILE AT ALGIERS, GOWON MET WITH BOTH SADAT AND FAISAL BUT REPEATEDLY REFUSED MEETING WITH QADDAFI. GOWON ASKED SADAT SPECIFICALLY WHAT EGYPTIANS WANTED, WHICH HE ASSUMED WAS RETURN OF TERRITORY, AND JUST HOW THEY EXPECTED ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE. IN REPLY, SADAT INDICATED WILLINGNESS ENTER INDIRECT TALKS WITH ISRAEL, AND SUGGESTED FMG COULD BE MOST HELPFUL BY BREAKING RELATIONS WITH GOI AND THUS PUTTING ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON ISRAELIS. GOWON, ACCORDING TO BEN YAACOV'S VERSION OF ARIKPO REPORT, TURNED DOWN SADAT, AND GAVE SAME REPLY TO FAISAL WHEN LATTER ALSO PROPOSED FMG BREAK RELATIONS WITH GOI. IN BOTH CASES, GOWON ALLEGEDLY SAID SUCH BREAK WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE TRULY NON-ALIGNED POLICY AND WAS THUS UNACCEPTABLE TO FMG.

4. BEN YAACOV TOLD AMBASSADOR HE THEN ASKED ARIKPO HOW FMG COULD AFFORD HOLD ITS GROUND WHEN OTHER AFRICAN STATES WERE BREAKING RELATIONS IN VIEW NIGERIAN ASPIRATIONS TO CONTINUED AFRICAN LEADERSHIP ROLE. ACCORDING BEN YAACOV, ARIKPO REPLIED THAT OTHER STATES INVOLVED WERE BEING BOUGHT BY ARABS ("MONEY DOES WONDERS," HE SAID) AND NIGERIA HAS NO NEED OF SUCH MONEY. ARIKPO ADDED THAT HE WAS GOING TO MEET HIS DAHOMEYAN COUNTERPART AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 26 AND WOULD INTER ALIA MAKE HIM COUNTEROFFER TO TRY AND KEEP MRGD FROMCAVING UNDER ARAB PRESSURE TO WHICH IT BEING SUBJECTED. (BEN YAACOV HIMSELF WENT TO CONTONOU SEPTEMBER 28 TO DISCUSS SITUATION WITH HIS COLLEAGUE THERE.)

5. BEN YAACOV ALSO RAISED WITH ARIKPO POSSIBILITY OF MEETING BETWEEN GOWON AND ISRAELI FONMIN EBAN WHICH BEN YAACOV HAD BEEN TRYING ARRANGE. ACCORDING BEN YAACOV, ARIKPO SAID SUCH MEETING NOT IN CARDS. GOWON HAD DECLINED MEET WITH ALGERIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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FONMIN AND COULD NOT AFFORD HOLD SIMILAR SESSION WITH ISRAELI. GOWON WOULD, HOWEVER, BE WILLING MEET WITH MRS MEIR IN US FOLLOWING HIS CALL ON PRESIDENT NIXON IF ISRAELI PRIMIN ALSO THERE. (SINCE MRS MEIR NOT PLANNING VISIT US AT THIS TIME, BEN YAACOV SAID, THIS IS ALSO NON-STARTER.)

6. BEN YAACOV CONCLUDED WITH JUDGMENT THAT ISRAELIS LIKELY BE ABLE MAINTAIN STATUS QUO IN RELATIONS WITH FMG FOR FORE-

SEEABLE FUTURE, AND THAT NONE OF "DISTANCING" ACTIONS (SHORT OF BREAK IN RELATIONS) WHICH WE DISCUSSED IN REFTEL ARE LIKELY BE TAKEN. DIFFICULTIES OF ISRAELI CONTRACTOR IN WESTERN STATE, BEN YAACOV FELT, HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED, AND FIRM HAS ENOUGH CONTRACTS IN HAND CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER THREE YEARS ALTHOUGH UTILIZATION RATE FOR MATERIEL COULD DROP IF ADDITIONAL CONTRACTS NOT SOON FORTHCOMING.

7. COMMENT: MAKING DUE ALLOWANCE FOR POSSIBILITY THAT EITHER (A) ARIKPO WAS TRYING TO PLEASE HIS INTERLOCUTOR OR (B) BEN YAACOV ADDED ROSY TINGE TO COMMISSIONER'S REMARKS AS PART OF DELIBERATE POLICY OF RADIATING OPTIMISM, THIS NONETHELESS STRIKES US AS PRESSY FAIR PICTURE OF OVERALL FMG POSTURE ON ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION. NAC RESOLUTION ON ME CERTAINLY WENT FURTHER THAN FMG WILLING COMMIT ITSELF, LIMIT OF WHICH IS PROBABLY HORTATORY, SANCTION-FREE OAU RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT ADDIS ABABA. HOWEVER, WE ARE SOMEWHAT LESS SANGUINE THAN BEN YAACOV ABOUT LIKELIHOOD OF FMG TAKING SOME VISIBLE STEP TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM GOI, AND ELIEVE FMG CONCERN FOR LEADERSHIP IMAGE IN AFRICA MAY YET INDUCE IT TO TAKE ACTION, SHORT OF BREAK IN RELATIONS, ALONG LINES SUGGESTED REFTEL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LAGOS07942
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS REINHARDT
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973091/aaaaaamd.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LAGOS 7532 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Jan-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <28-Jan-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER FMG VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005